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**RUSSELL LIBRARY**  
123 BROAD STREET, MIDDLETOWN, CT 06457

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Members of the Education Committee: My name is Vincent Juliano, and I am the Assistant Director of Russell Library, Middletown's public library. I am writing to oppose HB #6357, An Act Implementing the Budget Recommendations of the Governor Concerning Education. My objections to this bill relate to **Section #26**, which alters the method by which Connecticard reimbursement funds are distributed.

For those of you who are not familiar with the Connecticard program, it is a voluntary statewide reciprocal borrowing program that permits public libraries to provide services to non-residents. Public library service in Connecticut is almost completely dependent on local funding, especially in regard to the purchase of library materials, staffing, and lending services.

Prior to the implementation of the Connecticard program in the early 1970's, each public library in each local town was an island unto itself. If you lived in Town-A, you had to use only the Town-A Public Library. This situation was unsatisfactory to both libraries and to the public. Wealthier towns could afford better libraries with more extensive collections, while some less wealthy towns made special efforts to provide the highest quality library service they could afford. Naturally, residents of communities that had invested heavily in library service were not anxious to share that service with residents of towns that provided poor library service. This meant that access to reading materials and information was unequally distributed across the state.

Librarians, library trustees, and legislators worked together to remedy some of the inequities in library service by developing a system that opened up the collections and resources of all public libraries to all Connecticut residents. In effect, local public libraries became part of a statewide system. Good will and a process for reimbursing local libraries for serving non-residents made the system work. Reasonable reimbursement allows each public library to afford the additional burden of lending books to "customers" who do not financially support the library.

Reducing Connecticard reimbursement threatens the existence of our voluntary system of statewide library cooperation and endangers free and equal access to information and reading materials. It also fails to recognize that public libraries have continued to participate in the Connecticard program despite the fact that reimbursement has failed to keep pace with costs. Back in 2004, the State Library hired an independent contractor to determine the cost per loan transaction. Nine years ago, that cost was found to average \$1.07 per loan. During the most recent Connecticard year (March through February), Russell Library lent 134,870 items to non-residents. Under the existing formula, it would be paid \$0.22 per loan, about one-fifth of the 2004 per loan cost. If the formula is changed to cap payments, Russell Library would receive under \$0.15 per loan.

Finally, the current statute (CGS Sec. 11-31a-c) places the authority to adopt Connecticard regulations with the State Library Board. The proposed bill would negate the authority of that Board.

Thank you for your consideration of my concerns regarding HB#6357.